

The Role Of Literature As Vocabulary Teaching Instrument Of A Foreign Language In Middle School

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Abstract

Keywords:

vocabulary; language; literature; foreign; middle-school.

Nowadays, most of the time teaching and learning a foreign language is limited to mastering some grammar rules. Both teachers and students prefer this approach to a foreign language because it involves only the application of "rules", of pre-established "schemes" without the need for creativity and skill in communication. Vocabulary intensifies our ability to function in a complex world, helping us to express ourselves clearly and concisely. Without assimilating enough vocabulary, students cannot have relevant communication, cannot express their ideas and cannot understand each other. On the other way, literature unites the past with the present and makes us aware of our value. It not only provides information but also provides a closer look at things. It reflects the state of a society, its values, strengths and weaknesses. literature is an authentic material that exposes the student to everyday vocabulary. The reader comes into contact with the thoughts, feelings and traditions of the characters being thus exposed to a varied lexical field. Literature is a useful tool in the learning process and due to the impact it has on the reader. The aim of this brief study is to investigate the efficiency of using literary works in teaching vocabulary. There was a number of 72 5th and 6th graders that participated to the research, from a middle school within Arad county. The preliminary results, after the intervention, show that pupils from the experimental group became more passionate about reading, have become more creative and have enriched their cultural baggage.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Wortschatz; Sprache; Literatur; Fremdsprache; Mittelschule.

Heutzutage beschränkt sich das Lehren und Lernen einer Fremdsprache meistens darauf, einige Grammatikregeln zu beherrschen. Sowohl Lehrer als auch Schüler bevorzugen diesen Ansatz gegenüber einer Fremdsprache, da er nur die Anwendung von "Regeln", von vorher festgelegten "Schemata" beinhaltet, ohne dass Kreativität und Kommunikationsfähigkeiten erforderlich sind. Der Wortschatz stärkt unsere Fähigkeit, in einer komplexen Welt zu funktionieren, und hilft uns, uns klar und präzise auszudrücken. Ohne genügend Vokabeln aufzunehmen, können die Schüler keine relevante Kommunikation haben, ihre Ideen nicht ausdrücken und sich nicht verstehen. Andererseits verbindet die Literatur die Vergangenheit mit der Gegenwart und macht uns unseren Wert bewusst. Es bietet nicht nur Informationen, sondern auch einen genaueren Blick auf die Dinge. Es spiegelt den Zustand einer Gesellschaft, ihre Werte, Stärken und Schwächen wider. Literatur ist ein authentisches Material, das den Schüler mit dem alltäglichen Wortschatz vertraut macht. Der Leser kommt mit den Gedanken, Gefühlen und Traditionen der Charaktere in Kontakt, die auf diese Weise einem abwechslungsreichen lexikalischen Feld ausgesetzt sind. Literatur ist ein nützliches Werkzeug im Lernprozess und aufgrund ihrer Auswirkungen auf den Leser. Ziel dieser kurzen Studie ist es, die Effizienz der Verwendung literarischer Werke im Vokabeltraining zu untersuchen. Es gab eine Reihe von 72 Fünft- und Sechstklässlern, die an der Untersuchung teilnahmen, von einer Mittelschule im Landkreis Arad. Die vorläufigen Ergebnisse nach der Intervention zeigen, dass Schüler aus der Versuchsgruppe leidenschaftlicher lesen, kreativer geworden sind und ihr kulturelles Gepäck bereichert haben.

1. Introduction

Vocabulary is viewed as the main topic when it comes to new language acquisition. It's difficult to communicate something specific and understand what others say if you don't dominate a specific number of words to get your point across and in a similar tendency to comprehend the others. Regardless of whether we are discussing the primary language or another dialect we are attempting to learn,

correspondence depends on words. At the point when a youngster begins conveying a message, he utilizes words to send his message.

When referring to second language acquisition, scientists have demonstrated that having a decent information on jargon is a stage forward in getting the language while its absence, it's an intense deterrent. There are numerous speculations about the most ideal

approaches to train jargon and the etymologists came up with their own researches or encounters. Yet, once in a while, what's best for a few, is unseemly or hard for other people. One thing that is certain is that there are a few perspectives that must be considered when managing jargon and these are: age, social foundation, local language, fitting procedures. (Barton, 2001)

2. Theoretical foundation

The main explanation behind learning an unknown dialect is to impart. Correspondence implies understanding the message somebody needs to pass on to you and having the option to react, that is, offer a conceivable response. To do that, mastering of vocabulary is required. Jargon is "the study of words", and alludes to knowing a word, knowing its importance and having the option to fit it in the unique situation. For the most part, realizing a word includes knowing its structure and its significance at the essential level. In more profound viewpoints it implies the capacities to know its:

- Meaning, i.e., relate the word to an appropriate object or context
- Usage, i.e., knowledge of its collocations, metaphors and idioms, as well as style and register (the appropriate level of formality), to be aware of any connotations and associations the word might have
- Word formation, i.e., ability to spell and pronounce the word correctly, to know any derivations (acceptable prefixes and suffixes),
- Grammar, i.e., to use it in the appropriate grammatical form.

There are various methodologies and exercises that can be utilized by educators to show writing: the data-based methodology, the language-based methodology, the individual reaction approach, and the expressive methodology. (Bedi, 2011)

The data-based methodology is a method of training information about writing while writing is viewed as a wellspring of data to understudies. Perusing is significant, however found in close association with other open abilities, for example, composing, talking and tuning in, or suitable utilization of language. The instructor assumes significant part in this methodology. The methodology gives educators classroom focused exercises.

The Language-Based Approach means that the exercises identified are: conceptualizing, guided

drama and short conversations. This methodology improves student's language capability. This methodology could improve the advancement of language capability. Through this methodology, students were required to improve their language capability by practicing the objective language. Teachers should go about as the fundamental direction to lead this methodology in the study hall and to motivate students to pay attention to the language. This would urge the understudies to utilize new words routinely and they can improve their language.

The Personal Response Approach depends on individual's translation and reaction of a solitary scholarly.

The Stylistic Approach is concerned about the utilization of phonetic apparatuses to investigate scholarly messages. It drives students into full arrangement and enthusiasm for writing.

We barely at any point envision utilizing abstract writings as material for educating jargon. The abstract works give a wide range of registers that can make the procurement cycle more fascinating for the understudies.

There are loads of reasons why scholarly messages ought to be utilized to instruct jargon:

- Authentic material
- Cultural information
- Natural language
- Different drawing in topics
- Illustrations
- Language in setting
- Personal association
- Creativity improvement (Daskalovska & Dimova, 2012)

In the following, there is going to be presented a brief list of instruments to pick as materials for instructing:

Books: The utilization of books as materials for language instruction end up being a suitable method. The books ought to be mindfully chosen to make the understudies' perusing drawing in and spurring. By utilizing the novel as material for learning a subsequent language, students figure out how to see the world from various perspectives, can think of their

own perspective identified with a character or circumstance, can expand their social standpoints.

Verse: Using verse to encourage language allows the understudies to communicate inventively and openly without the limitations of exacting punctuation rules.

Sonnets: permit the understudies to focus harder on familiarity as opposed to exactness. By their short structure, they keep the perused from getting drained or overwhelmed. Bringing sonnets as material for training a subsequent language resembles taking natural air in the wake of investing a lot of energy in.

Short-Stories: Engaging, short and hilarious, short stories are a suitable decision as material for language learning. On account of their length, they can be perused all through a couple of classes and can build up a proper demeanor towards learning.

Dramatization: One of the most alluring and energizing methods of language learning. It allows the understudies to find themselves, their capacities, or, despite what is generally expected, to become whoever they feel like. Dramatization is certainly an innovative method to get familiar with a subsequent language. The understudy isn't confined, however allowed to communicate and his sentiments. Dramatization as a training method establishes strong scholarly and passionate conditions that urge understudies to think. (Harmer, 2007)

These types of texts present various linguistic forms, uses, stylistics and rules of the written language as well as cultural language enrichment. They reflect the traditions, the customs and the way characters communicate, which enables them to understand the difference between referential and representational language. In this way, they learn that language can involve, and words can mean much more than explained in a dictionary, i.e., they go beyond the referential use of the words. While reading the texts they become engaged in the plot and forget about the difficulties and inhibitions they might have about grammatical rules and vocabulary. When choosing a text, the teacher should always bear in mind that the students' beliefs about the usefulness of the text are very important, which means choosing the text together and discussing the benefits from it. Linguists claim that if the text provides good stimuli for personal involvement, it will without doubt contribute to higher linguistic competences of the reader/learner.

Another goal of using literature is to develop a habit of reading. As many students would agree, extensive reading is the best way to acquire a language, but this should be preceded by developing good reading strategies and ability to make good choice of books according to the difficulty level and the linguistic knowledge of the learner. (Enever, 2011)

The literature feeds the imagination and the thinking skill, it promotes personal growth, it makes the learners think critically, support their opinion, discuss and become good readers. It is a good authentic material and provides authentic input for language learning. It enables students to be exposed to actual samples of real life. It contributes to cultural enrichment in the way that certain aspects of the target culture are introduced and provides a wide range of lexical and communicative options, thus making the learner a more competent speaker of the language by extending its vocabulary and all of the language skills, and finally it involves the reader personally which means it relates his life with the plot of the literary text, which in turn makes the reader eager to find out what will happen next.

3. Research methodology

The present brief research aims to investigate the efficiency of using literary works to teach vocabulary in middle school, at foreign language subjects. Many linguists have stated that literature offers a large context for language acquisition.

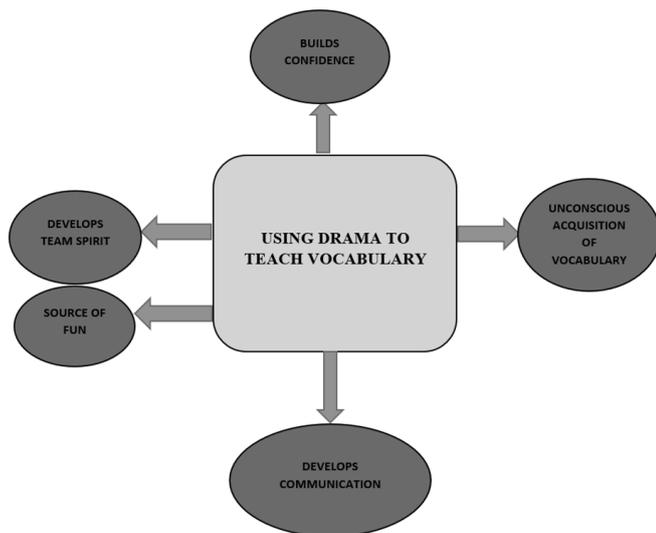
The participants who took part in the study will be secondary school students, namely a group of 72 5th and 6th graders. The research isn't outlined only around one literary text that is why several grades will take part in the research. In order to investigate the efficiency of drama as material for teaching vocabulary, the fifth graders and the sixth graders will be part of the experimental and control groups. Thus, the 5th and 6th A graders were the experimental group, in a number of 35 pupils, and the 5th and 6th B graders were the control group, in a number of 37 pupils.

The research was conducted during the second semester of the 2019th-2020th school year. There have been prepared lesson plans both for the experimental and control group based on the curricula. For the experimental group the lesson plans were based on different literary texts (dramas, novels, short stories and poetry) while for the control group teachers stuck to the exercises in the textbook. The language was introduced through different exercises and activities

based on the literary texts. For the warm ups there have been used different activities and games: role plays, miming, who's telling the truth, sentence sequence, predicting activities based on pictures, etc. The new language was usually introduced in the pre-reading activities in all sorts of exercises and games, and have been reinforced during the post-reading activities.

In order to investigate the above-mentioned variables, we are going to present the effect of drama on the development of vocabulary on the sample.

Figure 1. The outcomes of drama use in the 5th and 6th grade



The main aims of the drama lessons that were used in the experimental group, were:

- To build confidence in using accurate reproductions
- To understand main ideas and details in different kinds of dramatic scripts
 - To speak clearly enough (pronunciation, stress, intonation) to be understood by classmates and audience
 - To acquire good speaking and listening habits to understand, enjoy, and appreciate dramatic texts
- To build awareness and an appreciation for the arts.

In both classes belonging to the experimental group, English is studied as a foreign language at a beginner level, one of the titles of the drama lesson that was used during the experiment was: Snow White and the seven dwarfs and the main teaching techniques used were: explanation, individual work, drama.

The objectives of the lesson where drama was used, were:

- To fill in a text the missing information by understanding the meaning from the context
- To make a connection between the Romanian and English titles of cartoons
- To read the script and perform different roles from Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
- To take risks and demonstrate trust in others while performing
- To co-work for the success of the performance.

The materials that can be used in a lesson similar to this, are: handouts, blackboard, laptop and scripts. After reading the story, teachers can share the script of Snow White's story to the pupils who want to perform and asks them to act the different roles they were given from the story.

4. Results

After the experiment that was conducted, we have observed some positive results. Following the use of different types of literary materials (drama, novel, short story, poetry) to classes for a semester as a way to notice the advantages of using this method, we have noticed that pupils have developed some positive competences.

Regarding the use of drama, as it was presented above, we have chosen lone play as material for teaching, for the beginners, Snow White and the seven Dwarfs. Proving that teaching vocabulary through drama is easier and more relevant than simply using textbooks is not a difficult task to do.

We have had an optional drama course with the sixth graders for several years, called English through drama. Once again, we have to state that personality plays a very important role when talking about language learning acquisition. The extroverts in the class were the ones who always longed for the main roles and were the most enthusiast whenever the teacher came up with a new play. They were the most willing to act out the plays in front of the parents and the other teachers in the school. Thus, every now and then, we used to organize meeting where they performed in front of a larger audience. We have to say that the drama classes gave the students an authentic language learning environment where they forgot about the fears of not being accurate, of not using the correct grammatical structures or the fear of being mocked at by the others. The plays involved everyone and no one had time to pay attention to

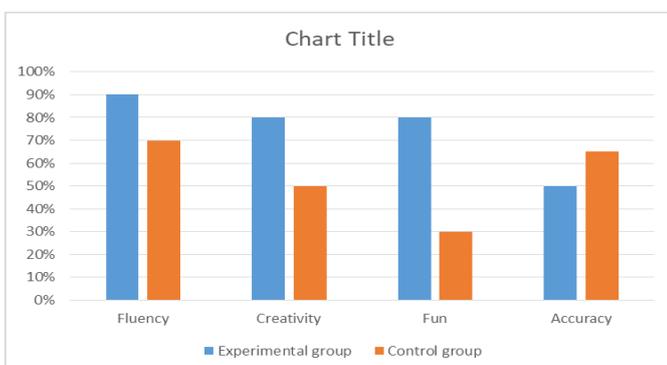
mistakes. On the contrary, it was the right environment to encourage one another, to be sympathetic and why not, give a helping hand. The theatre plays were a motivation for the students to use the language, which was a real encouragement for us.

In order to investigate the efficiency of this method, we chose the fifth and the sixth graders as participants to the study. The fifth and sixth A graders, the experimental group, were taught vocabulary through drama plays for a month while the fifth and sixth B graders, the control group, were taught vocabulary following the textbook as material for acquiring vocabulary. They all had two English classes per week. We prepared lesson plans for the experimental method. The aim was to have the students to acquire a number of words by the end of this research. The lesson plans were introduced by warm ups in order to prepare the students for the English class. Several games were played: miming, acting out, etc. All these games prepared students for the learning activity and gave them courage to let themselves introduced in the topic. The Lead-in activities put the students in contact with the topic they were to study about. The lessons were either introduced through slides or games or even short film scenes. In the practice part, they used the language in different situations. The vocabulary was introduced through games and was rehearsed while acting. They acted out different types of plays which put them into contact with different vocabulary topics.

The control group, followed only the textbooks exercises and were given only the Romanian correspondent of the unknown words without any games or role plays.

By the end of the study, several differences have been noticed.

Figure 2. Competences developed through the experimental stage



As it shown in the chart above, the experimental group was more confident with using the language.

They were no longer afraid of expressing themselves freely. The fear of making mistakes almost disappeared. The activity focused more on fluency rather than accuracy. Also, they did not have to memorize the new vocabulary because they acquired it unconsciously by games and acting. The meaning of the unknown words was more easily to be remembered because vocabulary was introduced in a context. This type of activity developed a team spirit. Each of them was part of the group with his own responsibilities. Being concerned that all things work out well, they started encouraging one another and used to learnt the lines even for the sake of the team, not to let the others down.

Therefore, all the activities they performed together made them empathize with the others. They became more communicative. They had to come up with ideas related to body movement, to gestures to the interpretation itself and even to give a feedback. Students were more enthusiast and more engaged in the activities because apart from being instructive, they were a source of fun. They did not feel constraint to learn and everything was done in a relaxed, engaging way.

The control group was less motivated to acquire the new vocabulary. They had to memorize the words which turned into short-time memory. The fact that the activities were introduced traditionally, they lacked enthusiasm. Also, school performance, measured in grades after both oral and written evaluation, has positively changed.

The experimental group had no difficulty in expressing themselves orally. They had no problems in reading the dialogues in front of the class because they had lots of practice during the semester. Thus, they were more fluent. The students in the control group paid too much attention on accuracy and were somehow under the pressure of not making mistakes. Thus, they lacked fluency.

For the students in the experimental group, it was easier to use the vocabulary required in context because they practiced during the entire semester. For the students in the control group, it was more difficult to insert the vocabulary in sentences because during the semester they were only given mother-tongue translations. Then, the students in the experimental group were more creative. They made more interesting dialogues because they were used to expressing their opinions or acting different roles. Lastly, because the

students in the experimental group were not under the pressure of making mistakes, they had fun.

Yet, if we were to refer to accuracy, we have to say that the students in the control group paid more attention to strict rules, to correct word order, to the spelling of the words in their notebooks.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, we consider that teaching vocabulary through drama promotes long-term memorization of vocabulary and keeps the students motivated and engaged in the process of acquisition. It is often written in the specific literature that the best time to start learning a new language is early childhood, because children tend to imitate everything they hear and see, they are like sponges. This statement can be supported by the results of the largest linguistic studies, an Internet survey having more than two thirds of a million respondents, that showed that children until the age of 18 are the most proficient at learning a second language. The study also showed that in order to gain the grammatical fluency of a native speaker one should start learning by the age of 10. (Snow, 2002)

Children learn the foreign language naturally while the adults think more consciously about language. They are more aware of the necessity of learning a new language. The life experience has taught them that in order to follow a particular career, to keep updated to the new technology they need to know a foreign language.

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article.

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